

a funded mandate to state and city law enforcement to help them process the kits and create additional lab facilities.

Now, as I have just said the number of people who have committed a sexual assault crime in prison would increase due to the processing of more rape kits, this leads into my next point of discussion—incarceration rates and funding for prisons. 12.7% of inmates are made up of those who are serving time for drug violations and marijuana expenses. We are pouring millions of dollars into our state and federal prison systems and too much of that is going towards people for up to twenty years for marijuana possession. However I propose to use the funding instead to evaluate something such as unprocessed rape kits and begin to treat minor drug use in a proactive manner. Marijuana possession should be removed as a state and federal crime and result in no jail time. Instead, as a nation we should implement counseling after a three strike policy or enter the convicted into a rehabilitation program if the drug use worsens. Many other countries decriminalized the use and/or possession of marijuana and they have some of the lowest rates regarding drug use and misdemeanor crimes. Just by reducing incarceration of people convicted of misdemeanor drug crimes, there would be an inclination of money to put forth on other issues at hand, not just processing rape kits. Taking one step at a time towards the issues that are more manageable such as the two I have just discussed is how America can move forward, it doesn't need to be a leap of faith and a tackle at a major issue, one objective at a time culminates for a strong, prosperous country.

MIKAYLA CLARKE, BELLOW FALLS UNION HIGH SCHOOL (FINALIST)

There are many different issues that the U.S. is facing right now, but one of the most beneficial actions the U.S. could do right now is to legalize marijuana. By legalizing marijuana for recreational and medical uses the country would benefit in many different ways. The crime rate would dramatically decrease, the use of prescription drugs would decrease and the economy would greatly improve.

The economy is not in a great place in the U.S., as we are \$18.7 trillion in debt, and counting. In 2014 the Washington Post wrote that Colorado made \$700 million off of medical and recreational marijuana in the first year it was legal. By legalizing marijuana, many more job opportunities would open and a whole new industry is created. The amount that the whole country would make would be in the billions.

The use of prescription drugs such as painkillers and sleeping pills is greatly increasing. Those pills become addictive and many people use them to get high because they're legal and easy to obtain. Children are given those pills, and they may become addicted at a young age. While there is the ability to overdose on those pills, marijuana is almost impossible to overdose on and brings better relief than prescription drugs. Overdose deaths from prescription pills were significantly reduced in the 23 states that allow medical marijuana. By legalizing marijuana the dispensaries get different strains of marijuana to help people sleep or deal with pain. If it's being used in the medical form the THC can be extracted and the CBD's can be used for the pain. There are many different ways to consume marijuana, such as oils, creams, foods, and smokable. In the U.S. there are over one million people using medical marijuana, yet, it's still not legal in all states.

People all over the country are getting in legal trouble for using and possessing mari-

juana. Young people are getting criminal records for a non-violent civil offense, and as a result will potentially be not allowed to gain federal student loans or jobs. With our limited police and jail resources, there are more important and harmful substances to focus on. In April of 2014 MSNBC wrote an article, Study: Marijuana Legalization Doesn't Increase Crime, "Even after Colorado legalized the sale of small amounts of marijuana for recreational use on Jan. 1 of this year, violent and property crime rates in the city are actually falling." Since the government is regulating the marijuana, it will be safer. There won't be strands that are laced with other harmful drugs, such as heroin or cocaine. By legalizing marijuana, less people will get arrested for the use and possession.

As a country we should legalize marijuana. First we should start with medical, because medical patients are more important. Then as a country it should be decriminalized. Then, we should legalize recreational. By legalizing marijuana not only will marijuana users benefit, even non-users will benefit.

MADDIE COLLINS, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL (FINALIST)

The 2008 financial crisis should have paved the way for a new era of banking, for real reform and regulation, for much needed change. The 2008 financial crisis should have forged the path for breaking up the nation's largest banks, but instead the crisis has taken a back seat to other, more heavily broadcasted issues. This back seat position has allowed the same Wall Street bankers who are to blame for the greatest recession since the Great Depression, to yet again be gambling with taxpayer money. In my opinion, it is of utmost importance to regulate our financial institutions in order to hinder their increasing ability to damage the global economy. We must understand that our country and the world as a whole would be devastated if another large bank were to go bankrupt.

In our country there are four banks that hold assets of more than \$1 trillion dollars. The largest, JP Morgan Chase and Company, holds \$1.8 trillion dollars in total assets, the equivalent of 14% of all total assets held by U.S. commercial banks. Comparatively, in 2001, the top asset holder was Bank of America with \$552 billion dollars. This increase is substantial, and will only continue to rise.

The problem with these large banks is that if they were to go unexpectedly bankrupt it would cause rippling effects on the economy, similar to what the world witnessed in 2008 with the bankruptcy of the Lehman Brothers. To give this some perspective, the Lehman Brothers' total assets were \$600 billion dollars, only one third of JP Morgan Chase and Company's current assets. These banks pose a real threat to the security of our financial system. As described by William C. Dudley, the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, there are two big problems with these "too big to fail" banks. First, to combat the threat that they pose, the government intervenes and gives large banks a funding advantage over smaller banks, thus creating an unfair playing field. Secondly, this funding advantage creates incentives for financial firms to become larger and more complex. As the banking system becomes more and more complex, the risks dramatically increase, only furthering the problem.

In a time where our government officials are advocating for the creation of more jobs and placing greater value on small businesses, we need to be more aware of what is best for this type of business. We need smaller, community banks to serve small businesses for they do a better job of fulfilling

their credit needs. Unlike with large institutions, community banks allow businesses to receive loans based on their reputation and reliability within the community that they serve, rather than basing it solely on their credit scores.

With a clear perspective and a shift in focus, it is certainly achievable to break up our nation's largest banks and ensure that greed and selfishness are no longer the ruling forces that drive our financial institutions.

OLIVIER ENWA, WINOOSKI HIGH SCHOOL (FINALIST)

The country that you and I live in is fantastic and I am really proud of the things we are doing. I would like to address two problems, which are racism and prejudice. Specifically, there are people who are being judged by their skin color or their religion in the United States.

More people of color are being sent to jail than white people. More people of color are also being killed by the police and executed by the judicial system. Bryan Stevenson, a social justice activist, said "I think that every human being falters sometime; no one is perfect. Our mistakes require the mercy and understanding of others, which we can't legitimately expect unless we offer the same to others". Innocent people are being killed for nothing. "Why do we want to kill all the broken people?"

The U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights protect people's rights, and we have the right to worship any religion. The First Amendment says that everyone in the United States has the right to worship any god or no religion at all. Over the years many Americans have forgotten the First Amendment when they think about Muslims. Innocent Muslims are blamed for things they didn't do, such as the attack in New York on September 11, 2001.

One cause of hatred against Muslims is the growth of ISIS, which uses Islam as an excuse to kill people and destroy land. Many Americans think that all Muslims are the same as ISIS, which is not true. I have friends who are Muslims and I definitely don't think they are terrorists. Innocent Muslims are being accused of terrorism and they are sent back to their countries. According to CNN, presidential candidate Donald Trump said that, "the United States should come to a complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." I think that innocent Muslims should be left alone.

Prejudice still exists in this amazing country because I've experienced it. One day I went to the store near my house with my friends. When we got there the cashier told us to put our backpacks down. As we were getting the stuff we wanted to buy, the manager came up to us and told us to "get out of my store" even though we hadn't done anything wrong. I was hurt that he had judged me by my appearance.

Better education in poor parts of the country and the education of police officers will help improve racism in the U.S. The United States should improve education for poor people. Most of the people being killed and put in jail are undereducated people of color. Speaking as a black man from Mozambique, I believe that if education is improved in poorer parts of the country our country will be a better place. Education is the key to everything. ●

#### RECOGNIZING THE CLEMSON TIGERS FOOTBALL TEAM

● Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, this month Clemson University played in the national championship game against the University of Alabama. Although they did not bring the championship title back home to South

Carolina this year, I would like to congratulate them on an outstanding season. They are certainly champions in my eyes and in the eyes of South Carolina.

The Clemson Tigers football team ended their season with a 14-1 record, a reputation for one of the best offenses in college football, and an ACC championship. Coach Dabo Swinney has led this special group of young men to the top of the mountain, and all signs point to them staying at the top for years to come.

Therefore, I recognize and congratulate the entire Clemson Tigers football team for all the hard work they put into a successful season. I look forward to another great season from the team this year. Go Tigers.●

#### REMEMBERING RALPH EUGENE NIX

● Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, today I wish to remember Ralph Eugene Nix, a beloved father and grandfather, a kind-hearted veteran, and a great Alaskan.

Mr. Nix served as a corporal in the Marine Corps during the Korean war, where he served as a gunner. The Korean war is often forgotten in our Nation's history. Because it was sandwiched between World War II and the Vietnam war, many in our country don't know much about the sacrifices made by so many—including Mr. Nix—during the war.

When I joined the Marine Corps, from officer candidate school on, I studied the war with great interest. Some call it the Forgotten War. I call it the Noble War. Tens of thousands of lives were lost, and the sacrifices were many in their effort to save the cause of freedom.

As the Korean War Memorial says, "Our nation honors her sons and daughters who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met." Mr. Nix was one of those sons.

He answered that call as a young man and continued his patriotism by serving his country after the war. In 1976, he moved to Anchorage. He married and had children. He became active in his church and devoted much of his life to helping other veterans. As a member of the board of directors for the Alaska veteran support group, he worked to help veterans and their families with warm meals, clothing, household goods, and food.

His devotion to his country was recognized by his participation in an honor flight to Washington, DC, in April of 2015—an experience that I know meant very much to him.

For me, greeting his honor flight in DC was one of the highlights of my career, as was the trip that we made to the Veterans Administration together in Anchorage.

Last year, after Mr. Nix received a medal from Korean officials for his efforts during the war, Mr. Nix wrote,

"To serve with you men and women is one of life's greater blessings. In some way—in some capacity we all are giving our lives for our fellow man."

Mr. Nix lived up to that statement. He also embodied another statement etched into the marble of the Korean War Memorial: "Freedom is not free." The defense of freedom comes with sacrifice. Ralph Nix knew this. Ralph Nix acted on this. Ralph Nix protected the freedom of America and our allies. His service to our country will not be forgotten.

I express condolences to his wife, Carol Nix; his son, Johnny Nix, and wife, Dawn; his grandson, Jacob Moser; his daughter, Jamie Nix, and husband, Aron Aguilar.

We lost a great American, an Alaskan treasure, and a marine. Semper fidelis, Ralph.●

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGE REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States submitting a nomination which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

(The message received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4207. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Propanoic acid, 2-methyl-, monoester with 2,2,4-trimethyl-1,3-pentanediol; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance" (FRL No. 9941-17) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 20, 2016; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4208. A communication from the Acting Congressional Review Coordinator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Exportation of Live Animals, Hatching Eggs, and Animal Germplasm From the United States" ((RIN0579-AE00) (Docket No. APHIS-2012-0049)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 20, 2016; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4209. A communication from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Margin and Capital Requirements for Covered Swap Entities" (RIN3064-AE21) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on Janu-

ary 13, 2016; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4210. A communication from the President of the United States of America, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the continuation of the national emergency that was declared in Executive Order 12947 with respect to terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-4211. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Colorado; Revisions to Common Provisions and Regulation Number 3; Correction" (FRL No. 9941-46-Region 8) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 20, 2016; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4212. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Approval and Promulgation of State Implementation Plan Revisions; Rules, Public Notice and Comment Process, and Re-numbering; Utah" (FRL No. 9932-59-Region 8) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 20, 2016; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-4213. A communication from the Deputy Undersecretary for International Affairs, Department of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Progress in Implementing Chapter 16 (Labor) and Capacity-Building under the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement"; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-4214. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-259, "Access to Emergency Epinephrine in Schools Amendment Act of 2015"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4215. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-260, "Nuisance Abatement Notice Amendment Act of 2015"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4216. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-261, "Vending Regulations Amendment Act of 2015"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4217. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-262, "Workforce Job Development Grant-Making Reauthorization Amendment Act of 2015"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4218. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-263, "Film DC Economic Incentive Amendment Act of 2015"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4219. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-264, "Extreme Temperature Safety Amendment Act of 2015"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4220. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report